

## I-E. Program Priorities

From these strategic documents, the primary outcome expected from the Exchange Network assistance agreements is more informed environmental decision-making enabled by improved access to, and exchange of, high-quality environmental data from public and private sector sources. With this outcome in mind, proposals should demonstrate support for and results toward the tiered EN program priorities below. Applicants are advised that higher scoring evaluations will potentially result from well-articulated projects supporting at least one Tier 1 activity.

### *Examples of Support to Priorities:*

- Increase timeliness and availability of water quality data flows to EPA's WQX by decreasing delays between entry into local systems and availability to all EN partners.
- Expand efficiency and improve quality of facility data sharing to reduce administrative burden by reduction or elimination of manual and/or duplicative data entry
- Expanded functionality of airshed data reporting, at reduced costs, through shared infrastructure and tools with EN partners.
- Standardization and comparability of data will result in the prevention or earlier detection of errors.

More examples of success in meeting program priorities can be found at [www.epa.gov/exchangenetwork](http://www.epa.gov/exchangenetwork).

### **Tier 1. Activities to Expand Data Exchanges and Data Availability to Exchange Network Partners:**

- Completion of sustainable flows for national and priority system data exchanges identified in section II of Appendix A by the end of the project's period
- Geospatially enable existing national and priority system data exchanges
- Expansion of national and priority system data exchanges, already deployed by the applicant, to other network partners through collaborative reuse of existing tools and services
- Network publishing to allow EN partners and the public to access, integrate, and analyze information from sources across the Network
- Support to bring partner's existing systems into compliance with EPA's Cross-Media Electronic Reporting Regulation (CROMERR)
- Implement climate change/greenhouse gas emissions data exchange

### **Tier 2. Activities to Expand Innovative Flow of Environmental Information:**

- Innovative projects in support of non-regulatory data flows, such as emergency response data, nationally significant geospatial data sets developed under OMB circular A-16 ("Coordination of Geographic Information and Related Spatial Data Activities"), open dump

data exchanges, and water quality laboratory data reporting, that demonstrate potential applicability to multiple EN partners

- Establishment of *new*, Node 2.0-compliant nodes
- Develop standalone Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) standards-based software for node installations to publish dataflows in formats that may include WMS, WFS, SOS, and AtomPub

Please note that grant resources are not available in FY 2010 to support upgrading existing nodes to the Node 2.0 specification. **For applicants that propose CROMERR enhancements, their**

**narrative must describe how they plan to reuse currently approved solutions developed by other states (e.g, OK, DE, IN, TX, etc.) or the approved Central Data Exchange solution developed by EPA. Proposed budgets must appropriately reflect the adoption of an existing solution rather than the development of a new solution.** Applicants should refer to [www.epa.gov/cromerr](http://www.epa.gov/cromerr) for examples of approved state solutions and the Central Data Exchange solution. Approved CROMERR applications are posted on this website, along with other detailed program information. Applicants should also note that their narrative must describe the project in specific technical and programmatic detail to receive a positive evaluation.

EPA also wishes to clarify how it will evaluate innovative projects that integrate national and priority system flows such as the Homeland Emergency Response System (HERE). If, as part of an innovative project, the applicant will be implementing a new national or priority system data flow, EPA will score this proposal as being in tier 1. For example, a proposal that includes completion of the RCRAInfo Handler data exchange and integration of this exchange into HERE would be considered as falling in tier 1. If, on the other hand, the applicant is implementing an application such as HERE that is integrating existing data flows, and the proposal does not otherwise include any of the activities included in tier 1, then EPA would score this proposal as being in tier 2. For example, a proposal includes two goals: goal 1 is implementation of HERE, integrating an existing RCRAInfo Handler data exchange and goal 2 is implementation of the Non-Point Source Best Management Practices data exchange. Because this proposal does not implement any new tier 1 exchanges nor include any other tier 1 work, it would net a tier 2 score.

Applicants may wish to reference the ENLC's Geospatial Strategy Report and white paper ([http://www.exchangenetwork.net/exchanges/cross/GeospatialStrategyReport\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.exchangenetwork.net/exchanges/cross/GeospatialStrategyReport_FINAL.pdf)) on issues related to exchanging geospatial data over the Network and promoting the use of Geospatial Mark-up Language (GML) for the exchange of geographic features (points, lines, polygons) over the Exchange Network. EPA endorsed the exploration of Geospatial "Really Simple Stuff" (GeoRSS) GML to address most of the exchange of geospatial features over the Exchange Network. Applicants can strengthen their proposal for Network grants funding by explaining how their proposed data exchange efforts are linked to national efforts to improve the transmission and sharing of geospatial data and/or geo-referenced environment program data currently underway in support of environmental program missions.

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## **V-A. Evaluation Criteria**

EPA review panels will evaluate and score proposals from eligible applicants using the following criteria. The EPA Selection Official will make the final funding decisions based on an applicant's score and other factors as discussed in section V-B. Appendix D provides an example of a project narrative.

**Expected Outputs, Outcomes and Environmental Results** (20 points): EPA will evaluate the clarity of project outputs, outcomes and environmental results (such as improved environmental decision-making) and the description of a method for tracking them using these criteria:

- Does the proposal clearly tie project goals to outcomes such as burden reduction, costs savings, and improved data quality and timeliness? (5 points)

- Does the proposal clearly tie outcomes to environmental results (e.g., specific ways that improved data quality and timeliness will improve environmental decision-making; data how data sharing among partners will enable agency managers to manage water and air sheds more effectively). (5 points)

Does the proposal include a plan that allows the applicant to track and report progress towards achieving the project's expected goals to EPA? Does the proposal include a plan that allows the applicant to track and report to EPA progress towards achieving the project's expected outputs, outcomes, and environmental results? Each grant funded goal, such as a completed data flow, should have several outputs scheduled over the project period leading to the goal. (10 points)

**Project Feasibility and Approach** (20 points-5 points for each subfactor ): EPA will evaluate the feasibility of proposed projects using the following criteria:

- Does the design of the project appear to be within the technical capabilities of the applicant, and compatible with EN technology?
- Does the proposal clearly describe project roles and responsibilities for the applicant and, for collaborative projects, each partner?
- Does the project narrative clearly describe how the applicant's IT/IM staff are collaborating with environmental or health programs to integrate project outputs into the programs' business operations, thereby increasing the likelihood that the project will achieve its desired outcomes and results.
- Applicants must affirm their commitment to reuse existing EN tools or share new tools with EN partners:
  - For existing flows, has the applicant committed to using and adapting existing tools or;
  - For innovative flows, has the applicant committed to sharing the tools developed or significantly customized for the project?

**Exchange Network Priorities** (30 points): EPA will evaluate how well a proposal advances the Exchange Network program objectives (Section I-D), and the consistency of the proposed work with Exchange Network priorities (Section I-E). For more detail about data exchange activities see Appendix A or the Exchange Network website at <http://www.exchangenetwork.net/exchanges/>.

Under this criterion, applicants are advised that only well-articulated projects that address at least one Tier 1 activity will be potentially eligible to receive the maximum points under this factor. Applicants are specifically advised that if their proposal does not address any Tier 1 activities, it will only be eligible for a maximum of 20 points under this factor. Specific criteria include:

- Does the proposal commit to a Tier 1 project involving:
  - Completion of sustained flows for national and priority system data exchanges by the end of the project's period
  - Expansion of national and priority system data exchanges, already deployed by the applicant, to other network partners through collaboration and the reuse of existing tools and services
  - Network Publishing to allow others to use information (see definition in Appendix B),
  - Climate change and greenhouse gas emissions data exchange
  - Bringing an existing system into compliance with CROMERR

- Does the proposal commit to a Tier 2 project involving:
  - Innovative projects developing sustained non-regulatory data exchanges, such as emergency response data and nationally significant geospatial data sets developed under OMB circular A-16 (“Coordination of Geographic Information and Related Spatial Data Activities”), open dump data exchanges, and water quality laboratory data reporting.
  - Establishing new, Node 2.0-compliant nodes

**Budget, Resources and Key Personnel** (15 points-5 points for each subfactor below): EPA will evaluate: (1) the budget’s appropriateness including the amount allocated to each goal and its adequacy to support and complete the proposed work; and (2) the qualifications of the project manager and other key personnel and the applicant’s resources to perform the project.

- Does the proposal include an appropriate amount budgeted for each goal in the project narrative?
- Is the budget sufficient to support completion of the work within two years?
- Does the proposal document the qualifications of the project manager and other key personnel to perform the proposed work, and does the applicant demonstrate it has the resources to perform the project?

**Past Performance** (15 points): EPA will evaluate applicants on their progress towards achieving the expected results under prior Exchange Network grants and as reported in Exchange Network Grant semi-annual progress reports (past recipients who have a poor semi-annual reporting record will receive a reduced score). If an applicant does not have prior Exchange Network grants then they will be evaluated based on their progress towards achieving the expected results under other prior federal agency assistance agreements (an assistance agreement is a grant or cooperative agreement and not a contract) performed within the last 3 years.

**Please note that in evaluating applicants under this criteria,** the Agency will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources including agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or reporting information, please indicate this in the proposal and you will receive a neutral score for this criteria-7.5 points. If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors